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LETTER DATED 5 FEBRUARY 1998 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to attach the text of a letter dated 4 February 1998 which I received from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have it brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN

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Annex

[Original: English]

Letter dated 4 February 1998 from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with Security Council resolution 1088 (1996), I attach the thirteenth monthly report on Stabilization Force (SFOR) operations. I would appreciate your making this report available to the Security Council.

(Signed) Javier SOLANA

Appendix

Thirteenth monthly report to the United Nations Security Council on Stabilization Force operations

1. There are approximately 35,000 troops currently deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Croatia, with contributions from all the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and from 20 non-NATO countries. Over the reporting period (21 December 1997-20 January 1998), most of the temporary reinforcements that had been sent in to support the Republika Srpska Assembly elections redeployed out of theatre.

2. SFOR has continued to conduct surveillance and reconnaissance by means of ground and air patrols. A total of 2,250 sorties were flown by combat aircraft over the reporting period, with the SFOR helicopter fleet flying 156 hours.

3. Over the reporting period, SFOR forces continued to secure the transmission towers used by Srpska Radio Television at Duga Nijva, Udrigovo and Veliki Zep in Multi-National Division North and at Trebevic, and at Leotar in Multi-National Division South-East.

4. On 27 December, SFOR troops ensured a safe environment and freedom of movement for the inaugural meeting of the new Republika Srpska Assembly in Bijeljina and for the subsequent meetings, which took place on 12 and 17 January 1998, all of which were conducted without incident. In addition, following the election of a new Republika Srpska Government in mid-January and in response to a request from the Office of the High Representative, SFOR increased patrols and established observation posts in the vicinity of Republika Srpska government offices in and around Pale. No unusual activities were reported.

Cooperation and compliance by the parties

5. The parties remain generally compliant with most military aspects of the Peace Agreement across the whole area of operations.

6. The inspection and verification of barracks and cantonment sites remains a priority task for SFOR. The operation to reduce those sites by 25 per cent began in June 1997, when SFOR reported 770 sites (323 combat sites and 447 infrastructure sites) and set the deadline of 20 December 1997 for the reduction. Thanks in part to the willingness of both entities, this goal was exceeded, and as of 9 January 1998 there were 534 approved sites in the SFOR area of operations (a total of 255 combat sites and 279 infrastructure sites). SFOR will pursue further site reductions in 1998.

7. During the reporting period, SFOR inspected 253 military weapon storage sites: 96 Bosniac, 77 Bosnian Croat and 80 Bosnian Serb. The following unauthorized weapons were confiscated: from the Bosnian Croats, 1 sniper rifle, 6 rocket-propelled grenades, 12,700 small arms rounds, 40 grenades and 165 mines; from the Bosnian Serbs, 10 had grenades. In addition, on 13 January SFOR

troops confiscated two tons of illegal weapons from the Ozren enclave, south-east of Doboj in the Republika Srpska. Various mortars, nearly 200 grenades and more than 20,000 rounds of ammunition were confiscated and, in line with established policy, will be destroyed.

8. SFOR continues to support the International Police Task Force (IPTF), on a case-by-case basis, in its inspections of local police stations. Over the reporting period the following weapons were confiscated: from the Federation, 14 grenades, 15 mines, 1 rifle, 1 rocket-propelled grenade and 23 small arms rounds; from the Bosnian Serbs, 1 long-barrelled weapon and 10 7.62-mm rounds. All these confiscated weapons will be destroyed after a period of time, to allow for appeals.

9. With respect to the Specialist Police, the Republika Srpska Police Anti-Terrorist Brigade (PATB) is under SFOR control and surveillance, with SFOR liaison officers attached to each unit. The PATB units in northern Bosnia are already fully compliant with all the instructions issued by the Commander of SFOR on 15 August 1997. In south-eastern Bosnia, the delivery of SFOR-issued identity cards to PATB members is expected to be completed shortly. All Republika Srpska policemen continue to be encouraged to join the IPTF certification process.

10. Over the reporting period, no unauthorized checkpoints were reported. However, there were some reports of blocked roads, due largely to individuals participating in street demonstrations to protest against local conditions. These demonstrations were not organized by the entities and are thus not considered an overall threat to freedom of movement. SFOR and IPTF monitored every such situation without incident, and the roads were invariably cleared quickly.

11. A further impediment to freedom of movement occurred when railway traffic between Zenica and Zavidovice was suspended on 9 January 1998. The suspension was in response to several stoning incidents and was the first of its kind since June 1997. The cantonal police response has been to provide an additional police escort.

12. A regular bus line, authorized by the Office of the High Representative in early December, connecting Sarajevo and Banja Luka was operational for less than two weeks because the bus line and timetable had not been officially approved by the Bosnian Serb authorities. The Deputy High Representative warned that failure to re-establish the line was a direct violation of the Peace Agreement and that SFOR and IPTF would monitor the movement of buses and ensure unimpeded access. The bus line was subsequently re-established and is now operating on a daily basis without problems.

13. Over the reporting period SFOR monitored a total of 378 training and movement activities: 228 Bosniac, 51 Bosnian Croat, 96 Bosnian Serb and 3 Federation. A ban on all training and movement activities was imposed on the Butila unit of the Federation Rapid Reaction Brigade from 28 November 1997 until 31 January 1998 because of non-compliance during the municipal election and threatening behaviour. In addition, a 14-day ban (from 6 to 19 January) was imposed on the Bosnian Serb 14 Logistic Base and on the Educational Recruit

Centre as a result of their continual late notification of training cancellations.

14. Over the reporting period, SFOR monitored 65 demining operations, which resulted in the removal of 52 anti-personnel mines and 2 items of unexploded ordnance. SFOR has developed a training programme for instructors and team leaders in order to enable the entities to run their own courses in February and March, with the aim of increasing the number of deminers in the spring. The courses for the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosniacs started in Banja Luka and Tuzla, respectively on 24 December, with 30 students in each. The Bosnian Croat course started on 5 January in Mostar with 16 confirmed students. Reports indicate high student quality, enthusiasm and positive results. Although the number of demining operations for the past month has been low, overall compliance is deemed satisfactory, in view of the personnel and demining equipment in use in the courses and given the bad weather and the holiday period.

Cooperation with international organizations

15. Within its capabilities, SFOR continues to provide assistance to the international organizations in theatre and works routinely with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Office of the High Representative, IPTF, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

16. SFOR is continuing to support the installation phase of the municipal elections, primarily by providing a secure environment and area security and by supporting IPTF. SFOR also continues to participate in the OSCE election results implementation committees at the national and regional levels.

17. SFOR has been working closely with the parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina to help them develop modalities for reconfiguring battle tanks as mine rollers within the framework of the arms control limitations agreed under article IV of annex 1 B of the Peace Agreement. The aim of this initiative is to enable the parties to use the tanks for mine-clearance work without fear of violating their arms control agreement.

18. SFOR continues to support the opening of additional airfields to civilian use. Over the reporting period, representatives from SFOR and the Office of the High Representative met with Bosnian Federation President Ganic and with Tuzla airport and canton officials to discuss arrangements for civilian aircraft to operate from Tuzla airfield. Similarly, in Sarajevo, SFOR has been meeting local airport officials and airline representatives to examine ways of increasing the number of slots available at the airport for civil passenger aircraft.

19. As reported last month (see S/1998/39, para. 15), SFOR had been negotiating with the Department of Civil Aviation and the Croatian and Serbian air-traffic control to make additional airspace available to facilitate civil aircraft overflights. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was, however, not prepared to sign the agreement and thus no progress can be reported.

Outlook

20. Tension is expected to remain in contested areas as the municipal election results continue to be implemented, and acts of intimidation and violence might occur in conjunction with the return of refugees and displaced persons.